

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE MESSIAH, Händel's most successful and best-known oratorio, was composed in the year 1741 in twenty-four days, from August the 22d to September the 14th. It was first performed at a concert given for charitable purposes at Dublin, Ireland, on April the 13th, 1742, Händel conducting the performance in person.

According to the historical evidence, Händel knew that the Dublin orchestral and choral resources were by no means on a par with those of London, and was markedly influenced by this circumstance in the composition of his work. In his choruses he did not go beyond four-part writing, and kept his orchestra within the most modest limits, so that no instrument except violin and trumpet plays a solo part, and oboe and bassoon do not appear at all in the score, although these instruments participated in the performance, as was proved by a later discovery of orchestra-parts written for both. Thereafter Händel, beginning with March the 23d, 1743, brought out *The Messiah* every year in London with great applause; in the course of time he made various alterations in certain numbers, set several new ones to music, transcribed a few arias for different voices, but left the work as a whole unchanged, both vocally and instrumentally, from its original form; thus bearing witness that, despite its limitations, this primitive conception of the work was likewise the enduring one.

As the centuries have passed, a considerable number of vocal scores have, of course, been made after Händel's partition; notably that by Dr. Clarke (Whitfield-Clarke, 1809), and a later one by Vincent Novello. Their value, however, was more or less doubtful, their character being rather that of transcriptions in pianoforte style, with not infrequent arbitrary or capricious aberrations, than a faithful and exact reduction of the orchestral score. Neither have the more recent editions of vocal scores based on the Mozart orchestra score, with its many contrapuntal charms, quite fulfilled expectations, as they materially increased the difficulty of the piano part.

Hence, a vocal score which should be in every way reliable and practical has become a matter of prime necessity. The present edition agrees at every point with Händel's original score, as it follows the facsimile edition of this

latter with most careful exactitude. Slight deviations from the original, which in the course of many years have obtained almost traditional authority, are inserted in small notes in every case, the professional artist being left free to employ them or not, at his discretion.

With regard to the performance of this grand work by chorus and soloists, much of importance might be said; but this would lead too far afield, and we shall, therefore, confine ourselves to the matters of chiefest concern. The direction of the choruses, which in our Master's works are for the most part peculiarly prominent in their monumental character, will naturally be entrusted to competent chorus conductors, who will care for crystallizing precision of execution and a clear, logical conception, and who are responsible for these points.

The interpretation of their parts by the soloists is a different affair. Here we confront the weighty question: "May the soloist proceed subjectively, or must he proceed objectively?" Probably the best answer to this crucial query is found in a passage from the unrivalled work of an authority in this province, namely, "Die Lehre von der vokalen Ornamentik des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts," by Dr. Hugo Goldschmidt. He writes: "The essence of reproduction, to feel and re-create that which was felt and imparted by the creator, does not exclude—within natural limitations—the assertion of creative power. The modern theory of æsthetics founded by Lipps rightly proceeds from the idea, that the interpreting artist creates, in a sense, the work anew. With his gradual penetration of the art-work he creates new values, which are of the highest importance for art, because, without them, the creations of the great masters are only so much writing, and thus remain sealed to enjoyment. But the interpreter's work is no mere execution, comparable, let us say, to that of the builder who transmutes the architect's plans into material reality. His task is rather to seize the vital conception of the art-work, to blend it with his own ego and the views of his period, and thus to imbue it with life and effectiveness. Whether singer or instrumentalist, he is a child of his time. His artistry is a product of its mental culture. It develops and changes with the evolution of artistic requirements. His formative and emotional powers are